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MANAGEMENT COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

U. S. Department of Agriculture

A summary of significant events of
interest to USDA management

Issue #81
June 12, 1978

FLEXITIME.....The House has passed legislation that would allow flexible work schedules for federal employees. This legislation would waive the law requiring mandatory overtime for work over 8 hours and would permit agencies to experiment with workweeks of less than 5 days. Overtime would be paid only for work of more than 80 hours per pay period. Under this bill the Civil Service Commission would select the agencies that would participate in the 3 year experiment, however, no employee would be forced to participate.

Benefits from flexitime include:

- Working hours which suit individual needs.
- Extended hours to better serve the public.
- Less traffic congestion.
- Reduction in the use of overtime.
- Reduction in absenteeism and tardiness.
- Improved morale.
- Decreased short absences, especially for sick leave.

Within USDA, five agencies now are on flexitime: FS, FNS, ESCS, OGPA and OP. FGIS, AMS and SCS have submitted proposals and are waiting for the required approval by GSA.

1978 PAY PERIODS.....The USDA Newsletter dated March 15, 1978, contained an article stating that most government employees, including USDA, would receive 27 paychecks instead of 26 during 1978. This information obtained from a Civil Service Commission article in the Federal News Clip Sheet was in error and was subsequently corrected. During 1978, only 26 pay checks will be issued. (Contact: Frank Stidman, O&F, ext. 72370)

NEW MILEAGE RATES PROPOSED.....As outlined in the April 18, 1978, Federal Register, GSA has proposed to modify the current method of reimbursing Federal employees for official use of privately owned automobiles. This proposal would create either a "tiered mileage rate" or a single "weighted average mileage rate." The tiered rate essentially provides three separate reimbursement rates related to the number of cylinders in the vehicle. The weighted average provides for a single rate of reimbursement of 15 cents per mile as opposed to the current 17 cent per mile rate. The weighted average is derived by averaging operating costs for all sizes of vehicles, whereas the current 17-cent rate is computed on the operating costs of a standard sized vehicle.

The Department is in the process of preparing written comments on the proposal. Agency comments are being used as the basis for USDA's reponse. (Contact: Frank Stidman, O&F, ext. 72370)

EEO ACTIVITIES.....

...USDA Minority Employment - USDA's permanent full-time employment, as of March, shows the following breakout:

	<u>No. of PFT</u>	<u>% of Total</u>
Blacks	6,464	7.7
Hispanics	2,171	2.6
Indians	406	0.5
Orientals	598	0.7
Non-minorities	74,599	88.5
	<u>84,238</u>	<u>100.0</u>
Women	20,547	

...EEO Discrimination Complaints - In May, the Department received 19 formal complaints:

Race	5
Sex/Female	2
Religion	1
National Origin	1
Age	2
National Origin and Age	1
Physical Handicap	1
Reprisal	6

A total of 68 formal EEO complaints have been received this year.
(Contact: Gloria Torres, OP, ext 72973)

1890 SCHOOL AWARD.....The Farmers Home Administration has awarded a \$10,000 contract to North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University in Greensboro, a Black, 1890 land grant school. This award is for a study to ascertain to what extent rural local communities are utilizing their general revenue sharing funds to support public transit operations in their jurisdiction.
(Contact: Jim Frazier, OEO, ext. 74256)

TITLE VI ENFORCEMENT PLAN.....OEO recently provided the Department of Justice with a copy of the Department's plan for enforcing Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This plan, published to provide public notice of the compliance, enforcement goals and procedures of USDA, addresses OEO and agency responsibilities for the conduct of compliance reviews, complaint processing and formal enforcement activities.
(Contact: Richard Peer, OEO, ext. 77327)

MINORITY BUSINESS ENTERPRISE.....Minority business and community leaders from all over the U. S. participated in a one-day workshop on May 31 to promote access to, and enhance knowledge of, selected USDA programs. Among the topics discussed was contract and procurement opportunities with the Department. As a result of this workshop, establishment of an advisory committee on minority business enterprise is being considered. Secretary Bergland and Assistant Secretary for Administration, Dr. Joan Wallace, gave opening remarks to the meeting.
(Contact: Paul McCloskey, OEO, ext. 77921)

HANDICAP NONDISCRIMINATION REGULATIONS.....Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 prohibits discrimination solely on the basis of handicap in programs receiving Federal financial assistance. Section 504 applies to both program delivery and employment practices of the recipients and the regulations. Publication of the proposed USDA regulations, the responsibility of OEO, is imminent. OEO is handling complaints of discrimination in USDA programs on the basis of handicap and is coordinating implementation of Section 504 including the architectural accessibility requirements of the Rehabilitation Act as they relate to program recipients. (Contact: Richard J. Peer, OEO, ext. 77327)

VICE CHAIRMAN FOR FEDERAL GOVERNMENT LIAISON.....Robert V. Head, Acting Assistant to the Director for ADP Technology and Development in the Office of Operations and Finance has been appointed Vice Chairman for Federal Government Liaison for the 1980 Congress of the International Federation of Information Processing Societies. (Contact: R. V. Head, O&F, ext. 77557)

DIRECTORY OF SERVICES TASK FORCE.....A task force has been established for the purpose of preparing a handbook to explain services provided by the Office of Operations and Finance. This Directory should be available for distribution sometime in early August. The Directory will provide a better understanding of what services are offered, the procedures to follow and the appropriate office to contact when making requests. (Contact: Pat Ryan, O&F, ext. 77077)

CENTRAL HEATING PLANT SHUTDOWN.....GSA has advised that the Central Heating Plant which supplies steam to the USDA complex, and the majority of our neighbors in Southwest, will be shut down from Friday, August 25, 1978, at 2:00 p.m. through Monday, September 4, 1978, at 4:00 p.m. During that time there will be no steam for the cafeteria and no hot water in the restrooms. Air conditioning will operate as usual and the cafeteria will offer a cold food menu only. The buildings that will be affected are: Administration Building, South Building, Cotton Annex, Auditors and Auditors West. GSA has suggested that agencies encourage use of annual leave during that period to minimize the impact on and inconvenience to employees. Agencies having critical requirements for continuity of steam supply should notify O&F. (Contact: Pete Gagnon, O&F, ext. 75225)

REAL PROPERTY WORKSHOP.....The Office of Operations and Finance, through Sterling Institute, has completed a nationwide presentation of five real property workshops with a total of 166 USDA employees attending the course. Also attending were three representatives from Treasury and one from HEW interested in similar presentations for their own agencies. Over 90% of attendees rated all aspects of the workshops good to excellent. O&F is very encouraged by this response and is pleased at the agency support it received. The need for future courses is being evaluated, and the agencies will be consulted before any firm plans are made. (Contact: James Wood, O&F, ext. 75225)

WASHINGTON SPACE TASK FORCE.....The D.C. Space Steering Committee has begun assembling data for their space requirements analysis. Survey sheets have been distributed to each agency through appropriate Assistant Secretaries. Responses to the Assistant Secretary are due by June 15, 1978. The Assistant Secretaries have been asked to review the agency submissions and return them to the committee for analysis by June 26, 1978. The committee plans to complete its requirements analysis by July 17, 1978. (Contact: Pete Gagnon, O&F, ext. 75225)

PROCUREMENT.....USDA administrative procurements (procurements exclusive of agricultural commodities) for the first six months of FY 1978 totaled \$192,600,000, a 28% increase over the same period in FY 1977.

Procurement of construction was \$32,389,000, a decrease of 4% over the first six months of the preceding year. Small business received 61% of total award dollars as opposed to 72% for the same period last year. (Contact: Dean Smith, O&F, ext. 77527)

LEGISLATIVE ITEMS.....

...Boundary Waters Canoe Area - On June 5, the House passed H.R. 12250 which would designate the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness and establish the Boundary Waters Canoe Area National Recreation Area.

...Alaska National Lands Conservation Act - On May 19, the House passed H.R. 39, the Alaska National Lands Conservation Act. This legislation would designate large tracts of land as wilderness, recreation areas, parks and National Forests and would generally prohibit development of these areas. (Contact: John Mottershead, OBP&E, ext. 74654)

FY 1979 BUDGET.....Secretary Bergland appeared before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Agricultural, Rural Development and Related Agencies on June 8 to discuss the administrations views on House action on the FY 1979 Appropriations Bill House Full Committee mark-up is scheduled for June 13; floor action is not yet scheduled. Senate Subcommittee mark-up is scheduled for June 21. (Contact: Bob Sherman, OBP&E, ext. 76176)